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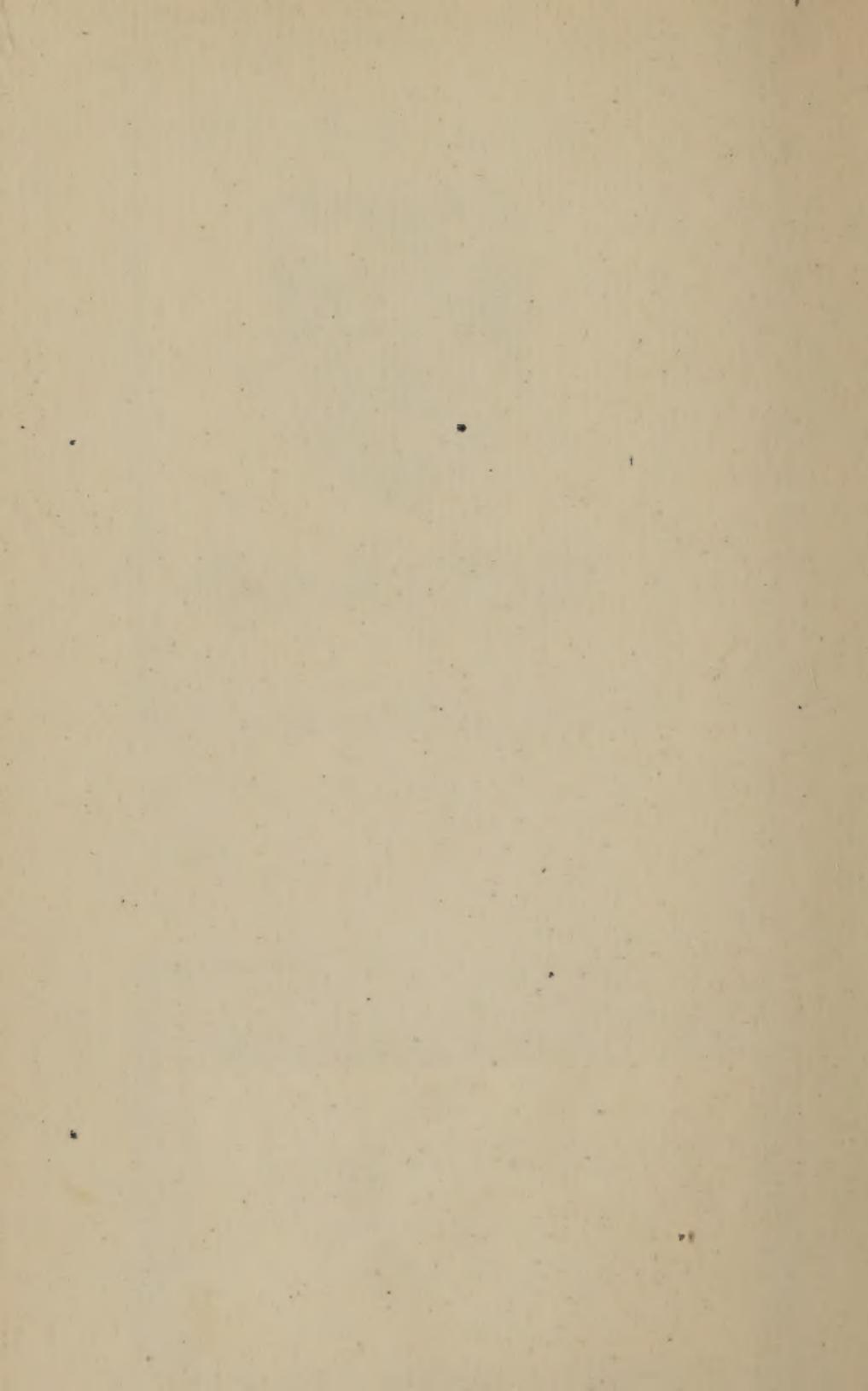
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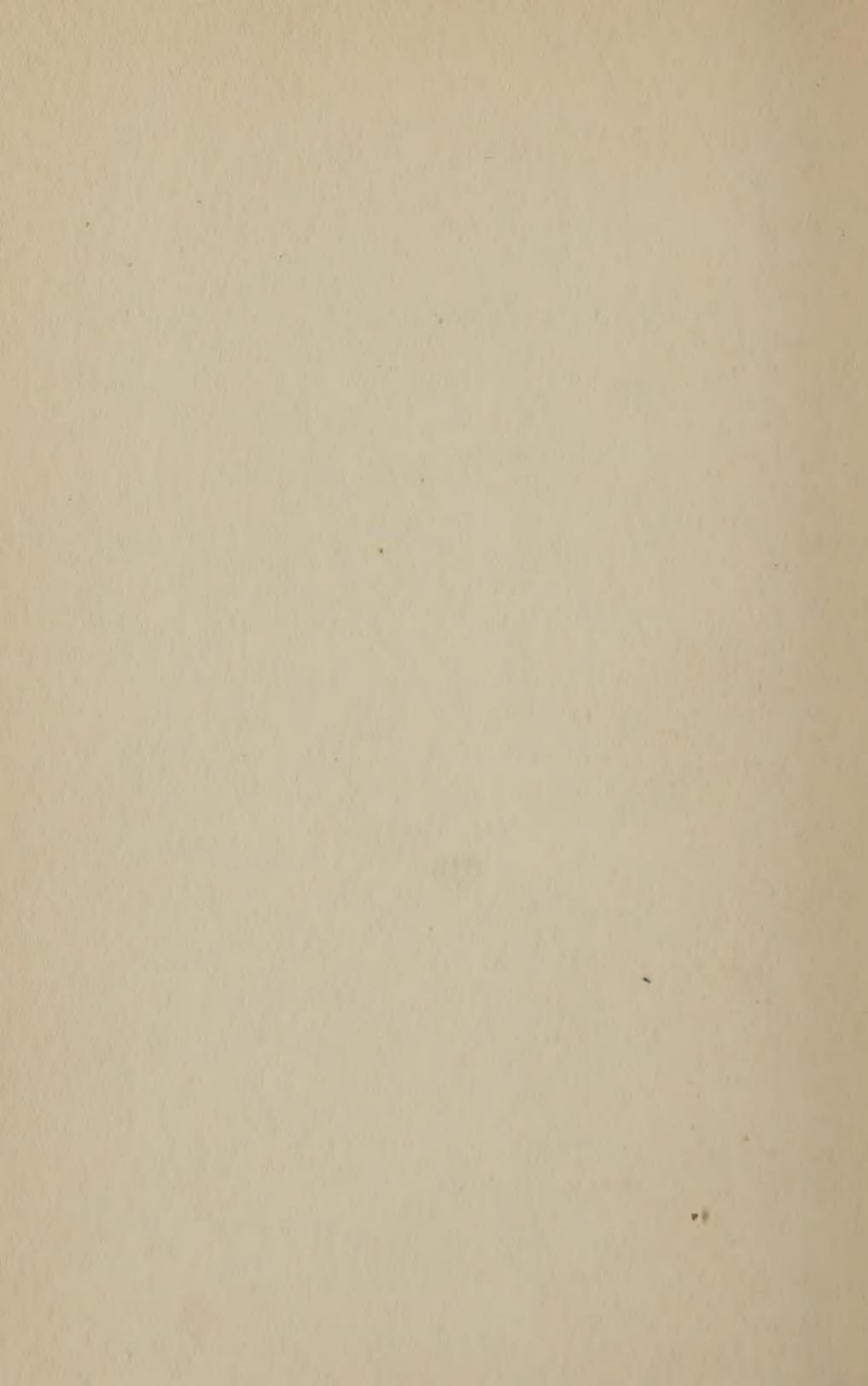
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SEEDS OF TIME



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# Seeds of Time

by John Drinkwater

If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow, and which will not,  
Speak then to me, who neither beg, nor fear,  
Your favours nor your hate.

MACBETH.

London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd.  
3 Adam Street, Adelphi

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TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
CLAUD LOVAT FRASER



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## SEEDS OF TIME

### THRIFT

(TO F. L.)

No beauty beauty overthrows  
But every joy its season knows,  
And all enchanted hours prepare  
Enchantment for to-morrow's wear.

Who in the just society  
That walks with him this hour can see  
But shadows of another bliss  
Loses both that delight and this.

Grieve not the parting day, for soon  
The nightingales will sing the moon  
Climbing the track that now the sun  
Leaves when the songs of day are done.

And grieve not when her beauty pales,  
And silence keeps the nightingales,  
For that eclipse again will bring  
The sun with all his birds to sing.

## THE TOLL-GATE HOUSE

THE toll-gate's gone, but still stands lone,  
In the dip of the hill, the house of stone,  
And over the roof in the branching pine  
The great owl sits in the white moonshine.  
An old man lives, and lonely, there,  
His windows yet on the cross-roads stare,  
And on Michaelmas night in all the years  
A galloping far and faint he hears . . .  
His casement open wide he flings  
With "Who goes there?" and a lantern  
swings . . .  
But never more in the dim moonbeam  
Than a cloak and a plume and the silver gleam  
Of passing spurs in the night can he see,  
For the toll-gate's gone and the road is free.

## A LESSON TO MY GHOST

SHALL it be said that the wind's gone over  
The hill this night, and no ghost there ?  
Not the shape of an old-time lover  
Pacing the old road, the high road there ?  
By the peacock tree, the tree that spreads its  
branches

Like a proud peacock's tail (so my lady says),  
Under a cloudy sky, while the moon launches  
Scattered beams of light along the dark silences ?  
I will be a ghost there, though I yet am  
breathing,

A living presence still in tight cottage walls,  
Sitting by the fire whose smoke goes wreathing  
Over fields and farmyards and farmyard stalls.  
As a player going to rehearse his faring,  
I will send my ghost there before my bones are  
dust,

Bid it learn betimes the sock it shall be wearing  
When it bids the clay good-bye, as all ghosts  
must.

Hush, then ; upstairs sleep my lady and her  
mother ;

The cat curls the night away, and will not stir ;  
Beams of lamp and beech-log cross one another,  
No wind walks in the garden there.

Go, my ghost, it calls you, the high road, the  
winding,

Written by the moonlight on the sleeping hill ;  
I will watch the ashes, you go finding  
The way you shall walk for generations still.

The window-latch is firm, the curtain does not tremble,  
The wet grass bends not under your tread,  
Brushing you shake not the rain from the bramble,  
They hear no gate who lie abed.  
Nodding I stare at the hearth, but I see you,  
My half-wit travels with you the road ;  
There shall be your kingdom when death shall free you,  
When body's wit is neither leash nor goad.  
Past the peacock branches proudly gliding,  
Your own ghost now, I know, I know,  
You look to the moon on the hill-top riding,  
The mares in the meadow sleep as you go.  
Your eyes that are dark yet great for divining  
Brood on the valleys of wood and plough,  
And you stand where the silver flower is shining  
Of cherry against the black holly bough.  
Rehearse, O rehearse, as you pass by the hedgerows,  
Remembrance of all that was my bright will,  
That so my grave of whispers and echoes  
May rest for the ghost that is yet on the hill.  
The primroses burn and the cowslips cover  
The starry meadows as heaven is clad ;  
Learn them all, O ghost, as a lover,  
So shall your coming again be glad.  
The inn-sign hangs in the windless watches,  
You pass the shadowy piles of stone  
Under the walls where the hawthorn catches

Shapes from the moon that are not its own.  
Wander, wander down by the cresses,  
Over the crest of the hill, between  
The brown lych-gate and the cider-presses,  
Past the well and across the green.  
Heed me, my ghost, my heir. To-morrow,  
Or soon, my body to ash must fall.  
Heed me, ghost, and I shall not sorrow—  
Learn this beauty, O learn it all.  
Night goes on, the beech-log's ended,  
Half-wit's drowsy, and doctrine done,—  
Ghost, come home from the road ; befriended  
My moon shall be when I leave the sun.

## ABSENCE

THIS was a fair land  
For the young soul to find,  
Whose orchards are renewed  
And blossom in the mind.  
Far wave, far heaven, far hill,  
I dream of England still.

And now this year's primrose  
Shines under last year's leaves.  
The swallow searches out  
Accustomed eaves ;  
Far wave, far heaven, far hill,  
I dream of England still.

Though fresh devices come,  
Yet is my custom true ;  
There my vocation is,  
That was my cradle too.  
Far wave, far heaven, far hill,  
I dream of England still.

## A NEW BALLAD OF CHARITY

GOD knows how time shall use me yet,  
For I with brain too wise have known  
A world corrupt, nor can forget  
Some evil there as still my own—  
Poor griefs henceforth may be alone  
My calendars to reckon by,  
But in my empires overthrown  
I'll keep a heart of charity.

Wronged, and wrong doing, still I'll pray  
For gentleness to all my kind,  
So soon to-morrow strikes to-day,  
And then a day when all is blind,  
And the vainglory of the mind  
Passes, and all together lie  
Where nothing is but hope to find  
The excellence of charity.

There is no virtue in us all  
But keeps with sin for housefellow,  
And, when the blade of death shall fall,  
Starveling and naked must we go ;  
And none of all shall warrant show  
To save him from damnation by,  
But only this—“ Dear God, you owe  
All that I dealt of charity.”

And, O you English, let us make  
Our hearts a little wise to-day,  
And learn for best religion's sake  
To walk awhile the homeward way.

Too long we cast an alien clay  
And towards a far and fading sky  
Too long a pilgrimage we pay—  
For there is not our charity.

Since I am English bred, I'll keep  
A year and year my journey still  
By little Langdale tarns asleep,  
Or, with my rhymes on Bredon Hill,  
I will go shepherding until  
The shires from Severn down to Wye  
Are figured messages to fill  
My quietness with charity.

And where the yellow-hammer sings  
From bramble blooms in Water Lane  
I'll make a world of sweeter things  
Than are in blind ambition's brain,  
And there I will forget the pain  
Of envy and the fears defy  
That in love's bitterness complain,—  
Because I walk with charity.

The primroses of Bagley Wood,  
Old apple trees at Piddington,  
Helvellyn in his cloudy hood—  
Shall I not write them one by one,  
The true, the best, occasion  
Of all my faith before I die ?  
For other gospellers are none  
To teach me holy charity.

## THE RECORDER

IT was not dawn ; in the full day  
I drowsed my wits in sleep,  
And let the rich world steal away,  
Without a song to keep.

Then from a dripping timber-stack,  
Where the wild thistle grew,  
Spreading his scarlet plumes and black,  
Again the loud cock crew.

## THE WOOD-CARVER

(TO W. G. S.)

OUT of his ash did he conceive her mood,  
Repentant Eve, her sad face bowed among  
Cascades of hair, her limbs, that had been dewed  
Lately in Eden where the apples hung,  
Now carved for ever in a lovely sorrow,  
All love, all grief, all kindred with the flowers  
That now flush wood and meadow, and  
to-morrow

Are ghosts, are tears among remembered hours.  
O little Eve, bowed in your loss for ever,  
Bowed bosom and clasped hands and hidden  
face,

We are your sorrow too, and master never  
The loss of spring and the wild April grace—  
We love, and sin, and lose, as you to be  
An image carved in beauty from the tree.

## THE DYING PHILOSOPHER TO HIS FIDDLER

COME, fiddler, play one tune before I die.  
Philosophy is barren, and I lie  
Untouched now by the plagues of all the schools,  
And only silly fiddlers are not fools.

Bring then your bow, and on the strings let be,  
In this last hour, merely the melody  
Of waves and leaves and footfalls hazardous,  
Where crafty logic shall not keep with us.

The patient fields of knowledge did I sow ;  
I have done with knowledge—for I nothing  
know.

Wisdom and folly set their faces hence,  
And in their eyes a twin-intelligence.

Only your notes may quick again the keen  
Tree-shadows cut upon the paddock's green,  
The pools where mirrored branches are at rest,  
The heron lifting to her windy nest.

And these are things that know not argument ;  
Come, fiddler, play ; philosophy is spent.  
Out of my thought the chiding doctors slip,  
And you are now the only scholarship.

## THE FLAME

MYSELF I do but find  
An ashen mind,  
While others greeting me  
Are flames, I see.  
Yet they, alone, lament  
Flames that are spent,  
Remembering with shame  
My crystal flame . . .  
Hereafter then I'll be  
A flame to me.

## THE GARDEN

STONE walls, dear trees, worn paths of every day,  
Because you have lived so cleanly in my mind  
Something of me for ever in you shall stay,  
When I the smaller acre yet shall find.

When noon is bright I shall be with your  
flowers,

With you the snows of winter I shall wear,  
And when, enchanted in the midnight hours,  
You are a silver lake, I shall be there.

And none shall know, or few ; yet, knowing not,  
The stranger here shall with your spirit take  
Into his heart a kinship unforgot  
That still you tell in numbers for my sake,  
And in your mute occasion then shall be  
Some whispered word that once you learnt of  
me.

## HEREAFTER

ONE evening, by some hearth, I know not when,  
A stranger to my song shall come to read  
What faring was my lot through times and men,  
How I was proud, how sorry, with what heed  
I was glad of women, and the stars, and corn  
Swelling upon my windy Cotswold height,  
What miracles I counted in the morn,  
And how I was defeated at the night.  
And he shall make some story, as I make  
Of men who sang as Marvell and as Donne,  
And he shall quick his wisdom for my sake,  
And put the plumes of celebration on,  
And tell how, as of old, the clouded brain  
Of man in song was a bright heaven again.

## VOTIVE

O MOON, swung there immeasurably far,  
Yet only in the pear-tree top, how then  
Shall we body in thought the beauty that you  
are—  
Your wizardry upon the souls of men ?

Hush ! Let us say it is the tender light  
That falls in silver circumstance and red  
Dimly upon the regions of the night,  
And saying this how little then is said.

Why should this mute enchantment thus possess  
Our hearts in adoration—how should come  
This worship of a ghost of quietness,  
Of spectral tides that move not and are dumb ?

Why do we worship ? We are but strays of  
will,  
While the sun takes us. Folded now and far  
From the day's light, we are minds possessed  
and still,  
Vision and peace. We worship what we are.

## TWO SHIPS

THE morning shone with April on  
A little silver ship at sea,  
With happy sails, and bearing bales  
To Panama from Tripoli,  
    And fortunately bound  
    She went without a sound.

Into the night, forlornly bright  
There came a little ship of gold,  
Without a name, she passed in flame,  
With cargoes never to be told,  
    Out of a port unknown,  
    Swinging to death alone.

## PORȚIA'S HOUSEKEEPING

WE are thrifty of joy in this our modern house ;  
We probe the springs of joy with uneasy rods,  
And shadow the worm in every thrilling bud.  
Virtue we know will walk in seedy rags  
Of knavery when the better humour fails ;  
And we know the good man's shadow of desire.

It was not so with Portia. She was simple,  
Plain for clear yes or no and good or bad.  
Bassanio at Belmont in the evening,  
Walking the terrace with Antonio,  
Was a good man with his friend, and that was  
all,  
Save that his lips were young and masterful.  
She had no fine philosophy of sin ;  
You lied, and that was bad. You gave your  
word,  
And, when time came, redeemed it. A  
treasure kept  
At another's cost was ashes in your hand.  
She liked her roses red, her lilies white,  
And counted punctual hours in guests a virtue.  
Sometimes she thought of a Jew and a young  
doctor  
Standing before the majesty of Venice,  
And smiled, without approval, then again  
To sow the asters or feed guinea-fowl.  
Gratiano, finding ever new Nerissas  
Among her maids, she told not to be tedious,  
And Gratiano said she was growing dull.

She liked the verse Lorenzo took to writing  
And made some tunes herself upon the lute  
To fit a little moonlight sequence. When  
Launcelot Gobbo stole a goose at Christmas,  
She did not say he was an honest fellow,  
But rated him and almost sent him off ;  
He didn't brag about it to his fellows.  
She had two children, and said two were  
enough,  
And loved them. She believed there was a God  
With an impatient ear for casuistry.  
Bassanio had no regrets, but some  
Agreed with Gratiano. I do not know.  
In Belmont was a lady richly left ?

## NIGHT MUSIC

(TO B. V. J.)

ENCHANTED as those days in Caliban's isle,  
A music from the night falls on my hill,  
    And variously played.

In the hushed moonrise many sounds there are,  
Inaudible but to the moods of prayer,  
    Into one music made.

Over the foothills from the valley comes  
The lowing of some straggler from the herd,  
    Roaming in pastures deep.  
A sheep-dog's challenge through the dark is met  
By the ewe-mothers and their lambs that now  
    Are muffled flocks of sleep.

Sweeping across the fern twin measures go,  
Towards Worcester one, and Hereford, where  
    weave,  
    Glooming, a pair of jars.  
Faintly, afar, a brown owl speaks the night,  
And hears high up, from out these hill-top pines,  
    His mate among the stars.

And, under all, the wind about the gorse  
Creeps, or as fire rushes, and burns up  
    All sound into one song.  
And in the night it flows about my grief,  
Healing a little, as on Setebos  
    Was eased that older wrong.

So in my heart beauty with beauty strives,  
And good slays good. O spirit of wisdom, run,  
As the wise wind to-night,  
Through me, and make my crazy tunes all one ;  
Upon the trouble of my blindness bring  
Light, and for ever light.

## IN THE VALLEY

LET none devout forgive my sin  
Who have not sinned as I ;  
The soul immaculate within  
Has not to measure by  
My sorrowing husbandry.

The dark, the error, of my days  
Shall be consoled by none  
That have not in forbidden ways  
Wandered as I have done  
With faces from the sun.

Princes of virtue, keep your skill  
Of pardon for your peers ;  
Frail with the frail I travel still  
Along uncertain years—  
Forbear your holy tears.

One hour in black Gethsemane  
I walked with him alone.  
He sees, he knows, he touches me—  
How shall it then be known  
To you, O hearts of stone ?

## MALEDICTION

THRUSH, across the twilight  
Here in the abbey close,  
Pouring from your lilac-bough  
Note on pebbled note,  
Why do you sing so,  
Making your song so bright,  
Swelling to a throbbing curve  
That brave little throat ?

Soon, but a season brief,  
The lice among your feathers,  
Stiff-winged and aimless-eyed,  
With song dead you shall fall ;  
Refuse of some clotted ditch,  
Seeking no more berries,—  
Why with lyric numbers now  
Do you the twilight call ?

Proud in your tawny plumes  
Mottled in devising,  
Singing as though never sang  
Bird in close till now—  
Sharp are the javelins  
Of death that are seeking,  
Seeking even simple birds  
On a lilac-bough.

Crushed, forlorn, a frozen thing,  
For no more nesting,  
For no more speckled eggs  
In pattered cup of clay,

Soon your song shall come to this,  
You who make the twilight yours,  
And echoes of the abbey,  
At the end of day.

In the song I hear it,  
The thud of a poor feathered death,  
In the swelling throat I see  
The splintering of song—  
What demon then has worked in me  
To tease my brain to bitterness—  
In me who have loved bird and tree  
So long, so long ?

Until I come to charity,  
Until I find peace again,  
My curse upon the fiend or god  
That will not let me hear  
A bird in song upon the bough,  
But, hovering about the notes,  
There chimes the maniac beating  
Of black-winged fear.

## SPECTRAL

WHAT will the years tell ?  
Hush ! If it would but speak—  
That shadow athwart the stream,  
In the gloom of a dream ;

Could my brain but spell  
The thought in the brain of that weak  
Old ghost that hides in the gloom,  
Over there, of the chestnut bloom.

I sit in the broad June light  
On the open bank of the river,  
In the summer of manhood, young ;  
And over the water bright  
Is a lair that is overhung  
With coned pink blooms that quiver  
And droop till the water's breast  
Is of petal and leaf caressed.

And the June sky glares on my prime—  
But there in the gloom, with Time,  
Huddled, with Time on its back,  
Is a shadow that is my wrack.

Yes, it is I in the lair,  
Peering and watching me there.

Under the chestnut bloom  
My old age hides in the gloom.

And the years to be have been,  
Could I spell the lore of that brain.  
But the river flows between,  
Over the weeds of pain,  
Over the snares of death,  
Maybe, should I leap to hold,  
With myself grown old,  
Council there in the gloom  
Under the chestnut bloom.

And so, with instruction none,  
I go, and leave it there,  
My ghost with Time in its lair,  
And the things that must yet be done  
Tear at my heart unknown,  
And the years have tongues of stone  
With no syllable to make  
For consolation's sake.

But peradventure yet  
I shall return  
To dare the weeds of death,  
And plunge through the coned pink bloom,  
And cry on that spectre set  
In its silent ring of gloom,  
And slay my youth to learn  
The thing that my old age saith.

## THE CRY

DEAR life, be merciful and kind,  
Lend me your hand, for I am blind,  
Lend me your wit, for mine too soon  
Inhabits with the spectral moon,  
Prepare your still intelligence  
To watch beside my ailing sense.

Life, I have made my pilgrimage  
All as you bade, and, wage by wage,  
Your service seemed but well to me.  
Now gentle in persuasion be,  
When after you I fall and bleed,  
And hear not where your footfalls lead.

My song no tardy messenger  
Has been of any word that there  
Dwelt from your charge for witnessing,  
Let me not be an outcast thing,  
Dear life, this weather, from your fold,  
With a great heart untimely old.

In faith to you have laboured long  
My blood, my purposes, my song.  
In faith to you my hope is dumb,  
To this poor waste of darkness come.  
O life, forsake me not, who lie  
Broken upon your Calvary.

## WHO WERE BEFORE ME

LONG time in some forgotten churchyard earth  
of Warwickshire,  
My fathers in their generations lie beyond  
desire,  
And nothing breaks the rest, I know, of John  
Drinkwater now,  
Who left in sixteen-seventy his roan team at  
plough.

And James, son of John, is there, a mighty  
ploughman too,  
Skilled he was at thatching and the barleycorn  
brew,  
And he had a heart-load of sorrow in his day,  
But ten score of years ago he put it away.

Then Thomas came, and played a fiddle cut of  
mellow wood,  
And broke his heart, they say, for love that  
never came to good . . .  
A hundred winter peals and more have rung  
above his bed—  
O, poor eternal grief, so long, so lightly,  
comforted.

And in the gentle yesterday these were but  
glimmering tombs,  
Or tales to tell on fireside eves of legendary  
dooms ;

I being life while they were none, what had  
their dust to bring  
But cold intelligence of death upon my tides of  
Spring ?

Now grief is in my shadow, and it seems well  
enough  
To be there with my fathers, where neither fear  
nor love  
Can touch me more, nor spite of men, nor my  
own teasing blame,  
While the slow mosses weave an end of my  
forgotten name.

## THE YEARS

WHEN I was young and twenty  
I'ld run a many mile,  
And when I came to thirty  
I'ld sit and rest awhile,  
And now that I am thirty-five  
I am the sleepiest man alive.

But maybe when I'm forty  
I'll shake my legs again,  
And walk from then till fifty  
With young and striding men,  
And hillward go in sixty's wear  
To see how yet the counties fare.

When I am old and eighty,  
All treasons will be done  
Of love and silly bitterness ;  
And I shall watch the sun  
Go out, and little heed the fear  
That smote upon my middle-year.

So twenty comes to eighty  
By many a stony track,  
And times I have for merchandise  
But sorrows in my pack.  
But youth foretold them not, and yet  
Age will but count them to forget.

So though I come from twenty  
To be at thirty-five,  
Beset by fears and fancies,  
The sleepiest man alive.  
Some birthday yet I'll rise and keep  
A prouder soul before I sleep.

Before I sleep at eighty,  
Never again to know  
The hill-tops and the counties  
And striding men below,  
And furious fevers fade away  
To song, and into grass my clay.

## TO AND FRO ABOUT THE CITY

SHAKESPEARE is dust, and will not come  
To question from his Avon tomb,  
And Socrates and Shelley keep  
An Attic and Italian sleep.

They will not see us, nor again  
Shall indignation light the brain  
Where Lincoln on his woodland height  
Tells out the spring and winter night.

They see not. But, O Christians, who  
Throng Holborn and Fifth Avenue,  
May you not meet, in spite of death,  
A traveller from Nazareth ?

## VOCATION

THIS be my pilgrimage and goal,  
Daily to march and find  
The secret phrases of the soul,  
The evangels of the mind.

While easy tongues are lightly heard,  
Let me with them be great  
Who still upon the perfect word  
As heavenly fowlers wait.

In taverns none will I be seen  
But can my dæmon teach  
My cloudy thought to wash all clean  
In the bright sun of speech.

## FAIRFORD NIGHTINGALES

THE nightingales at Fairford sing  
As though it were a common thing  
To make the day melodious  
With tones that use to visit us  
Only when thrush and blackbird take  
Their sleep nor know the moon's awake.

These nightingales they sing at noon,  
Not lyric lone, but threading June  
With songs of many nightingales,  
Till the meridian summer pales,  
And here by day that spectral will  
Is spending its enchantment still.

Nor shyly in far woodland bowers  
But walled among the garden flowers,  
The Fairford nightingales are free,  
That so the fabled melody  
Is from the haunted groves of Thrace  
Falling on Fairford market-place.

O nightingales that leave the night  
To join the melodists of light,  
And leave your coppiced gloom to dare  
The fellowship forsaken there,  
Fresh hours, fresh leaves can dispossess  
Nor spoil your music's loneliness.

## BEACONS

ONE home together by the fells we knew  
And the blue brakes of England in the spring,  
And we had sires who also heard the bells  
Somewhere along the English meadows. We  
Measure one cause, one spirit, and one word,  
And in one pilgrim faith have done our part  
In the slow world's devising. Some queer grain  
Of oak out of our soil moulded alike  
The *Mayflower*, the *Revenge*. The East has  
dreams,

Lotus and temples and the circled fingers,  
Building in contemplation. The sun returns  
Yet to the South with Mediterranean song,  
And Provence bears the old Athenian gift,  
And still is heard the praise of troubadours,  
Which is for service ; from the Siberian fields  
A sobbing and a moving in the night,  
Where a great lineage communes with the earth,  
Till grief is beauty and the wise revelation.  
So from the races life inherits well,  
Stillness, and flight, and faith. And we the  
West,  
Whose tides from Kent to California move,  
Shall we not be the new adventurers ?

America, you were in Shakespeare's word,  
And Milton's, half a prophecy. You were  
An Ironside when Cromwell took the field,  
Drake fared for you, and Nelson is your blood.

And England, little fens and pools and hills,  
Green friendliness of pastures in the dusk, \*  
White-thorn where thrushes nest, grey thatch  
and stone,

What excellence of you was there that day  
When an unnoted sail put out to sea  
From Plymouth to the England of a dream ?  
At Yorktown did your nobler heart lament  
Among the lost or beat with Washington ?  
And has not Lincoln in your proper tongue  
Your chronicle retold of Runnymede ?  
Then, pledged upon a happier covenant  
Than furnished old crusades, with none to fear  
Of arms or treasons, having for our faith  
To covet not an acre of the world,  
Shall we not be the new adventurers ?  
Come—let us get our gospel now by heart—  
*One man in grief sets a whole world in tears ;*  
*No man is free while one for freedom fears.*

## ENGLAND TO CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

ONCE—in the day of our meridian song  
And young armadas—on your Bohemian hill  
An older fame suffered an alien wrong  
Where arms again blasphemed a people's will.  
And freedom slept among your heroes then,  
Sepulchred on White Mountain, till a theme  
Of the unforgotten music called again,  
And sovranty was where had been a dream.

Fortune, for all our wisdom, we can shape not,  
Being free, we yet are kinsmen of the blind,  
The snares of our own hearts we can escape not,  
Our bravest end is fortitude of mind—  
But Masaryk knows, Bohemia knows, that  
thence  
The spirit of man walks in magnificence.

*May 1920.*

## THE MAN WHO WON THE WAR

### THE PASSING OF HIS BODY

WHOEVER sinned in this, it was not he,  
While warriors of the tongue defiled our name  
His was no casual service, nor shall be  
A casual fame.

To-day let all philosophies be dumb.  
And every ardour pause a moment thus,  
To say of him, who back from death has come,—  
“ He died for us.”

Not lonely, though unnamed. Battalioned deep  
With you are ghostly multitudes, who tell  
Nothing, nor claim. Together to your sleep  
Pass, and farewell.

*November 11th, 1920.*

## JOHN KEATS

OUT of the fevers and dark imaginations  
That were his day, he would turn to the  
mirrored quietness,  
The imaged world, ordered from the desires  
Of those his fathers whose fevers were as his  
own,  
And there he found the peace of understanding  
In Troys and Fairylands and Heaven and Hell.

And thence the brain that was John Keats took  
power  
To build an imaged world his own, and devise  
Shape for the fevers and dark imaginations,  
Winnowing, moulding all, till all was beauty.

Now again we are but blind men, darkly  
Fingering circumstance, sick men with our  
fevers,  
And his brief time of passion and frustration  
Shines over us, an image for our doctrine,  
A sorrow shaped, a speculation bodied,  
That we the clearer may behold ourselves,  
Because of his bright moons and nightingales.

And thus alone shall be the world's salvation.

## SAMPLERS

IN praise of love, upon my mind  
Samplers I'll make to be,  
As lovers long ago designed  
Emblems of courtesy,  
Threading in warm and frosty wools  
Their wisdom's calendars and rules.

He errs to think those hands were set  
All spinster-like and cold,  
Who spelt a scarlet alphabet,  
And birds of blue and gold,  
And made immortal garden-plots  
Of daisies and forget-me-nots.

The bodkins wove an even pace,  
Yet these are lyrics too,  
Breathing of spectral lawn and lace,  
Old ardours to renew,  
For in the corners love would keep  
His fold among the little sheep.

So I will samplers make as well,  
Nor shall the colours lack  
In shining characters to tell  
Your lovely Zodiac,  
And all your kisses there and words  
Shall spring again as flowers and birds.

## TO WASTE NOT

UNDER the snow  
Are roots to blow  
So soon with daffodils,  
And buds prepare  
The cowslips' wear,  
Buried below the hills.

Within the brake  
So soon shall wake  
The building birds to sing,  
And folded now  
In every bough  
Are bridals of the Spring.

Shall Love be lost  
In tardy frost  
When other flowers are free ?  
Or less than birds  
Shake happy words  
As blossoms from the tree ?

O Love, make haste  
Or time will waste  
The habit of your lute,  
Prepare your string  
To play the Spring,  
Or be for ever mute.

## THE BOND

O FAR and well my gentleness  
Has walked among your coverts green,  
With your still wisdom to possess  
My weary brain and gather in  
My thought from madness, as the bells  
Do beggared flocks from stormy fells.

Now mute and careful shall I live  
Your constant alien to be ?  
Or, as the honest fugitive,  
Lend love but sad security ?  
O love, be brave, and bid me go  
In freedom still your bondfellow.

## DECISION

HAD we our bodies to provide  
With rule for an eternal date  
Well should our intellectual pride  
Upon the years for witness wait,  
Holding our adversary's will  
But heresy for time to kill.

And here where but a mood goes by  
And we are folded from the sun,  
In marriage of the grave to lie,  
And every argument is done,  
Each burning hour of argument  
Is but in wrangling folly spent.

I will no cunning words devise ;  
Once told, I can but let you be  
In your own patient counsel wise  
Of my love's simple honesty,  
While somewhere is an acre sown  
That shall instruct us, bone by bone.

## SURETY

LOVE is not dead  
We have cherished it too long,  
We have planted it too deep,  
And we have watered well  
The roots and branches spread  
In earth and airy song.  
Love has a word to keep,  
A word to tell.

Yes, that is all.  
I know behind the fume  
Of this poor difference  
Love waits, nor grieves too much,  
Till the old voices call,  
And sings upon the gloom  
Too sure an eloquence  
For death to touch.

Too long a date  
Has love between us plied  
For that long trodden path  
To wear in weeds or rain,  
Too long in love's debate  
Have we been satisfied,  
For jealousies of wrath  
To blind the brain.

## UNION

### I

SUPPOSE me dead ; think of the man you made,  
A moment, but as earth, unbreathing more,  
His garments folded, and his reckoning paid  
Of love, and faith, and fame ; then, as before  
A chronicle all done, with *finis* writ,  
Ask if the man you made had truly been  
More worth your pride and daily watching wit  
Had fear of you one passage cancelled clean.

Would you not say, serenely gospelled then,  
" I taught him faith, I bade his word be said  
Fearing no challenge nor reproof of men ;  
And had the happy courage that I bred  
Once brought me chill obedience for wage,  
This chronicle had been a poorer page " ?

### II

For, dear, I can but serve you at the rate  
That is my heart's occasion, that is all ;  
If I deny myself and with you wait,  
It is not I, however you may call ;  
Something of me must go, if I deny,  
Though in denial shall be with you still  
A body walking and a watchful eye,  
The patient service of an impoverished will.

For if the love that loved, and chose, and came  
Ever again to you, nor ever found  
Estrangement in far absences, nor blame

For pilgrimage to other Edens bound,  
Should know one beauty by your will denied,  
Thenceforth how should old faith be satisfied ?

III

But when you bid me go as beauty calls,  
Knowing that my desire could follow none  
But fair vocation, and that intervals  
In honest love are still love's errands done,  
When you upon my embarkation wait,  
And cry, " O Keel ! forth in pursuit of spring,  
All Archipelagos to navigate,  
You are my ship, and this your voyaging "—

Then nothing lets between your sovran pride  
And all my kingdom, nor is poor pretence  
That over all my fortunes you preside  
When half my levies are rebellious pence ;  
Then do you govern that your craft began,  
A man, and not the shadow of a man.

## AGAINST TREASON

ALL you have been you can be in this hour,  
My need will be my need for evermore.  
Time cannot steal your excellence of power,  
Nor stain the love that liveried you before,  
If you shall but your wonted honour keep,  
And daily meet me with quick truth of old,  
And let nor change nor dark alloy nor sleep  
Betray your former witness of its mould.

But if in other features you present  
The woman that I loved, how should I make  
Renewal daily of an old content  
I knew for her whose covenant you break ?  
Though you yourself betrayed your elder pride.  
I would not in your treason be allied.

## FOR THIS MOMENT

LET me, who am your poet—(nor thereby  
Think me less yours that other worlds I sing  
Than your sweet universe) now let me try  
Persuasion such as in an antique spring  
Pan among cowslip meadows might have thus  
Found with his shepherd's daughter prosperous :

“ O love, why should you ever look beyond  
This gladness into past or future time,  
Accusing in your mind the heart now fond,  
With phantom treason or ungendered crime ?  
For mortal ever is the lover's kiss  
And mocks who claims diviner emphasis.

“ But one day and another day shall come  
New kisses, love, with each its sovran power  
Bidding to-morrow's history be dumb  
And yesterday's but a forgotten hour,  
Fold up your fears, put your sad fancies by,  
Lest in complaint our sweet occasion die.

“ Lest in complaint of sad example grow  
But barren hours to-morrow from to-day ;  
Love lives but by renewal, and can show  
Constant succession never ; therefore pay  
Proudly the charges of this present need,  
Or bid me sound on other shores my reed.”

## DEATH AND A LOVER

DEATH. A LOVER. HIS DEAD MISTRESS ON A BIER

### LOVER

BLIND, silly Death, although you nothing care  
For my despair,  
Could you not see my darling was too fair  
For earth to lose ?

### DEATH

The wit, when love comes to so quick a close,  
Distempered goes—  
No day but earth shall build bright limbs as  
those,  
For me to bruise.

### LOVER

Then, though the world is tearless for her sake,  
Some pity take  
Upon my dark immortal sorrow,—wake  
This pretty one.

### DEATH

Ten thousand years ago a lover cried,  
“ Ah, let betide  
What may, my grief must ever more abide.”  
His grief is done.

### LOVER

She might have borne me children straight and  
strong,  
To plough the long  
Furrows, and make their ploughing in a song  
Articulate.

### DEATH

Still shall the green blades break upon the  
spring,  
And song shall bring  
Her liberty to every captive thing,  
Early or late.

### LOVER

Though, Death, you govern me in argument,  
Still goes unspent  
My grief, my grief. How shall I be content,  
O King of Fear ?

### DEATH

I neither pity nor console. Farewell.  
Bearers, the bell  
Calls you. Alone his sorrow let him tell.  
She will not hear.

## THE PLEDGE

WHEN love is bright and whole again,  
I'll sing like the bee's weather,  
I'll set my colours up again  
    Like the cock-pheasant's feather,  
I'll find a note to make me one  
    With lyric birds that sing the sun.

I'll fill my songs with palmer's buds  
    And sprigs of thorn for Whitsunday,  
And they shall dance as willow rods,  
    And shine with garlands of the may,  
I'll be a theme that takes the spring  
    From bushes where the blackbirds sing.

I'll walk among my sheep again  
    And turn my steps to numbers,  
When love is bright and whole again  
    And fear has gone to slumbers,  
With wings again and flowers and stars  
    To be my coloured calendars.

## NUNC DIMITTIS

I HAVE seen the plover's wing,  
And the grey willow bough,  
The sandy bubbling spring,  
The hawk over the plough,  
    And now, instructed so,  
    I am content to go.

Songs of the lake and wood  
Of water and wind I have heard,  
And I have understood  
According to Thy word.  
    What then is now to learn ?  
    Seaward, O soul, return.

Though I shall walk again  
Nor spring nor winter field,  
Yet surely in my brain  
Are spring and winter sealed.  
    Earth you have shown me all,  
    I am ready for the call.

## THE PROVIDENCE

I do not ask, and yet you give,  
You give, and yet without design,—  
Only some wonder, fugitive  
In you from all the world, is mine.

You do not bid me serve, and still  
I am all service for your sake,  
And gift by gift my daily will  
For me does a new kingdom make.

## COVENANT

I WOULD no sweeter treasure know  
From your dear love than I can give,  
And in such peace as you bestow  
I pray for you to live.

Star to rejoicing star shall move  
And flower on happy flower shall shine,  
But all the sorrows of our love,—  
Let these be wholly mine.

Yet that is treason. For I bear  
No prouder heart than is your own,  
And you would scorn the love would share  
Delight and grieve alone.

## PERSUASION

Then I asked : " Does a firm persuasion that a thing is so, make it so ? "

He replied : " All Poets believe that it does, and in ages of imagination this firm persuasion removed mountains ; but many are not capable of a firm persuasion of anything."

BLAKE's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

### I

AT any moment love unheralded  
Comes, and is king. Then as, with a fall  
Of frost, the buds upon the hawthorn spread  
Are withered in untimely burial,  
So love, occasion gone, his crown puts by,  
And as a beggar walks unfriended ways,  
With but remembered beauty to defy  
The frozen sorrows of unsceptred days.  
Or in that later travelling he comes  
Upon a bleak oblivion, and tells  
Himself, again, again, forgotten tombs  
Are all now that love was, and blindly spells  
His royal state of old a glory cursed,  
Saying " I have forgot," and that's the worst.

IF we should part upon that one embrace,  
And set far courses ever, each from each,  
With all our treasure but a fading face  
And little ghostly syllables of speech,  
Should beauty's moment never be renewed,  
And moons on moons look out for us in vain,  
And each but whisper from a solitude  
To hear but echoes of a lonely pain,—  
Still in a world that fortune cannot change  
Should walk those two that once were you and I,  
Those two that once when moon and stars were  
strange  
Poets above us in an April sky,  
Heard a voice falling on the midnight sea,  
Mute, and for ever, but for you and me.

### III

THIS nature, this great flood of life, this cheat  
That uses us as baubles for her coat,  
Takes love, that should be nothing but the beat  
Of blood for its own beauty, by the throat,  
Saying, you are my servant and shall do  
My purposes, or utter bitterness  
Shall be your wage, and nothing come to you  
But stammering tongues that never can  
confess.

Undaunted then in answer here I cry,  
“ You wanton, that control the hand of him  
Who masquerades as wisdom in a sky  
Where holy, holy, sing the cherubim,  
I will not pay one penny to your name  
Though all my body crumble into shame.”

IV

WOMAN, I once had whimpered at your hand,  
Saying that all the wisdom that I sought  
Lay in your brain, that you were as the sand  
Should cleanse the muddy mirrors of my  
thought ;

I should have read in you the character  
Of oracles that quick a thousand lays,  
Looked in your eyes, and seen accounted there  
Solomons legioned for bewildered praise.

Now have I learnt love as love is. I take  
Your hand, and with no inquisition learn  
All that your eyes can tell, and that's to make  
A little reckoning and brief, then turn  
Away, and in my heart I hear a call,  
“ I love, I love, I love ” ; and that is all.

WHEN all the hungry pain of love I bear,  
And in poor lightless thought but burn and burn,  
And wit goes hunting wisdom everywhere,  
Yet can no word of revelation learn,  
When endlessly the scales of yea and nay  
In dreadful motion fall and rise and fall,  
When all my heart in sorrow I could pay  
Until at last were left no tear at all,  
Then if with tame or subtle argument  
Companions come and draw me to a place  
Where words are but the tappings of content,  
And life spreads all her garments with a grace,  
I curse that ease, and hunger in my heart  
Back to my pain and lonely to depart.

NOT anything you do can make you mine,  
For enterprise with equal charity  
In duty as in love elect will shine,  
The constant slave of mutability.  
Nor can your words for all their honey breath  
Outsing the speech of many an older rhyme,  
And though my ear deliver them from death  
One day or two, it is so little time.  
Nor does your beauty in its excellence  
Excel a thousand in the daily sun,—  
Yet must I put a period to pretence,  
And with my logic's catalogue have done,  
For act and word and beauty are but keys  
To unlock the heart, and you, dear love, are  
these.

NEVER the heart of spring had trembled so  
As on that day when first in Paradise  
We went afoot as novices to know  
For the first time what blue was in the skies,  
What fresher green than any in the grass,  
And how the sap goes beating to the sun,  
And tell how on the clocks of beauty pass  
Minute by minute till the last is done.  
But not the new birds singing in the brake,  
And not the buds of our discovery,  
The deeper blue, the wilder green, the ache  
For beauty that we shadow as we see,  
Made heaven, but we, as love's occasion brings,  
Took these, and made them Paradisal things.

THE lilacs offer beauty to the sun,  
Throbbing with wonder as eternally  
For sad and happy lovers they have done  
With the first bloom of summer in the sky,  
Yet they are newly spread in honour now,  
Because, for every beam of beauty given  
Out of that clustering heart, back to the bough  
My love goes beating, from a greater heaven.  
So be my love for good or sorry luck  
Bound, it has virtue on this April eve  
That shall be there for ever when they pluck  
Lilacs for love. And though I come to grieve  
Long at a frosty tomb, there still shall be  
My happy lyric in the lilac tree.

WHEN they make silly question of my love,  
And speak to me of danger and disdain,  
And look by fond old argument to move  
My wisdom to docility again,  
When to my prouder heart they set the pride  
Of custom and the gossip of the street,  
And show me figures of myself beside  
A self diminished at their judgment seat,  
Then do I sit as in a drowsy pew  
To hear a priest expounding th' heavenly will,  
Defiling wonder that he never knew  
With stolen words of measured good and ill,  
For to the love that knows their counselling,  
Out of my love contempt alone I bring.

NOT love of you is most that I can bring,  
Since what I am to love you is the test,  
And should I love you more than any thing  
You would but be of idle love possessed,  
A mere love wandering in appetite,  
Counting your glories and yet bringing none,  
Finding in you occasions of delight,  
A thief of payment for no service done.  
But when of labouring life I make a song  
And bring it you, as that were my reward,  
To let what most is me to you belong,  
Then do I come of high possessions lord,  
And loving life more than my love of you  
I give you love more excellently true.

WHAT better tale could any lover tell  
When age or death his reckoning shall write  
Than thus, " Love taught me only to rebel  
Against these things,—the thieving of delight  
Without return ; the gospellers of fear  
Who, loving, yet deny the truth they bear,  
Sad-suited lusts with lecherous hands to smear  
The cloth of gold they would but dare not wear.  
And love gave me great knowledge of the trees,  
And singing birds, and earth with all her flowers,  
Wisdom I knew and righteousness in these,  
I lived in their atonement all my hours ;  
Love taught me how to beauty's eye alone  
The secret of the lying heart is known."

THIS then at last ; we may be wiser far  
Than love, and put his folly to our measure,  
Yet shall we learn, poor wizards that we are,  
That love chimes not nor motions at our  
    pleasure.

We bid him come, and light an eager fire,  
And he goes down the road without debating,  
We cast him from the house of our desire,  
And when at last we leave he will be waiting.  
And in the end there is no folly but this,  
To counsel love out of our little learning,  
For still he knows where rotten timber is,  
And where the boughs for the long winter  
    burning,  
And when life needs no more of us at all,  
Love's word will be the last that we recall.

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J. D.

**Seeds  
of  
Time**

By  
John  
Drink-  
water

—

Sidg-  
wick  
and  
Jackson  
Ltd.







KU-995-230

